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ABSTRACT

This study investigated secondary teachers' perceptions of school organizational climate relative to their own professional growth and development attitudes. Instrumentation consisted of the "School Climate Profile," chosen for its range of determinants of school organizational climate in the secondary school, and a Likert scaling procedure to measure teachers' attitudes about their professional growth and development. The response rate of 62 percent represented a randomly selected sample of 89 out of 151 teachers. Gamma coefficients were computed for each variable, which was then ranked. conclusions drawn from the analysis indicated that teachers' perceptions of positive school climate related to the schools' ability to solve its problems and make improvements based on known goals. Structures that invited teacher participation in the decision-making process and created effective communication among students, parents, administrators, and school were next in importance. These conditions, as perceived by teachers, contributed to their perceptions of the school's organizational climate as related to their own perceptions for potential professional growth and development. (JAM)

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SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE RELATIVE TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDES

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SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE RELATIVE TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDES

INTRODUCTION

It is generally recognized today that schools are under pressure to perform well. That performance is measured by student achievement on standardized tests and the success of students to join the work force, attend college or contribute to their community.

The public demand for improved performance occurs simultaneously with conditions of increased costs and decreasing resources to accomplish the goal of educating the nation's children. Today, schools must pursue their goals with declining numbers of teachers being prepared to take the place of those leaving the profession through attrition or retirement. The talents and competency of teachers in the classroom and those entering the profession is also in question (Lieberman, 1988).

Amidst the activity of school reform and improvement, teachers are being asked to assume new roles of leadership and decision-making traditionally reserved for others. They are also working with new technologies, an increasingly diverse student population

and a variety of influences from parents and the community for which they may not be prepared.

Many of the demands for reform focus on the high school and the restructuring of the curriculum, course offerings, and instructional methodology. Goodlad (1984) and Boyer (1983) outline a number of changes that would increase student learning and the enjoyment of the learning process for both students and teachers. If these changes or improvements are to occur, teachers must be prepared for them, discuss the implications of the changes on themselves and "buy into" the changes as beneficial to them as teachers and for their students.

Generally, the suggestions for reform and improvement center on the school as the unit of improvement. The context of the school environment in which the improvement is to occur must be considered as it impacts on the teachers and others who will implement the improvement changes.

The climate of the school sets the tone for the school's approach to accomplishing its stated goal of student learning as well as its ability to effect improvement. The climate also serves as a determinant of teacher attitudes toward personal and professional growth and development (Norton, 1984; Dubin, 1972). If the perceived climate of the school inhibits either activity, a possible conflict exists.

Historically, schools have organized themselves

according to the classic bureaucratic model outlined by Weber (1952). It is a rational model characterized by a defined authority hierarchy, job specialization, and rules and procedures for operations as well as relationships. The goal of the bureaucratic organization is efficiency accomplished through the anticipation of uniform and predictable events.

Portions of the school operation are uniform and predictable, but the interaction of students and teachers in the teaching-learning process creates unpredictable events lacking in uniformity. Efforts for school improvement also require unprecedented innovation and flexibility of schedules and programs to foster student learning.

Bureaucracy produces organizational dysfunctions for itself and its members. Bennis (1966) warns that resources are not used well, communication and innovation are thwarted, conflicts are not resolved and new technology cannot be assimilated. The press to conform restricts creativity and provides no personal growth and development for mature individuals. This condition is counterproductive to the current need to rethink school organization and teachers' roles in it amidst the growing school improvement efforts nationwide (Lieberman, 1988).

Ideally, the teacher in a school organization is placed in a competency role and given the autonomy and

authority to execute that role. Bureaucratization of schools decreases teacher effectiveness through rules, controls, and reduced autonomy and authority. This formal organization gives its members cues about renewal potential, performance expectations, procedural indoctrination and more which influence the teacher as he/she functions within the school organization. These cues are potent influences on teachers which may hinder and/or stimulate professional growth (Goens, 1973).

Thus, it is suggested that the perceptions of the school climate based on the formal organizational structure influences teachers' professional growth and development. As individuals, members of organizations maintain a set of attitudes about themselves in their role and their professional growth and development potential in that role.

The dilemma for the school or school district revolves around the efficient management of the organization (usually accomplished through a bureaucratic organization) and the creation of a climate that provides teachers the opportunity and support for professional growth in that role. What teachers perceive as the climate of the school organization and what feelings and beliefs they maintain about their own growth would contribute to the solution of the dilemma.

Information about secondary teachers' perceptions of their school organizational climate and their

attitudes was gathered as part of this study. Further, the study sought to determine if a relationship existed between teachers' perceptions of their school organizational climate and their attitudes regarding their professional growth and development.

PROCEDURES

Purpose

This study investigated the school organization through the determinants of the climate of that organization as perceived by the members of the organization, the teachers. Also under investigation were the feelings teachers have about themselves and beliefs about what others think of their role expressed as attitudes about their professional growth and development.

Definitions

There is not a common definition of organizational climate among researchers, nor is there agreement about the concept as an organizational variable for the purpose of research. There is agreement among researchers that the environment of the work place is based upon the organization's structure and that the impact on the individual develops over time (DeYoung, 1978; Johnston, 1976; Eldridge and Crombie, 1975; Olmstead, 1975; Schneider and Snyder, 1974).

Schneider (1974b) derived from his literature

review a definition of climate as the summary of meaningful perceptions about the work setting which function to help people adapt to the organization. If the organizational structure gives cues to its members regarding expected behavior and interactions within the organization, perceptions have meaning (Schneider, 1974a).

School organizational climate is recognized as organization-oriented, not individually-oriented. Measurements of school organizational climate are mainly descriptive, and individual-oriented with less consideration for task, structure, technology, or other organizational indicators (Lau, 1976).

Attitude is described as a latent process within the individual which implies an inner process that gives direction or shapes an individual's behavior (deFleur and Westie, 1963). Attitudes expressed in an organization occur in a normative context and may be understood in terms of the needs those attitudes serve for the individual holding the attitude (Katz, 1960).

It follows that the measurement of attitudes can best be done through the use of instruments that utilize indicators of the attitude to be measured. A rating scale which measures the degree of affectivity, the strength of feeling (intensity) and its direction is considered an appropriate measure for an attitude defined as a complex, multidimensional, latent process

within the individual (Ehrlich, 1969; Katz and Stotland, 1959).

Instrumentation

For the puposes of this study, the School Climate Profile (Fox, et al., 1974) was selected because of its range of determinants of school organizational climate in the secondary school. The determinants of general climate factors, program, materials and process included in the profile are appropriate to the specific organizational structure of the secondary school.

Departmentalized programs, professional preparation required of teachers, specialized materials to deliver the educational program, and the procedures of operating the school organization are characteristics of the secondary school that the School Climate Profile is designed to measure through teacher perceptions. This instrument provided more information than others about the degree of influence each of the determinants contributed to the overall climate perception.

The School Climate Profile consists of 150 statements. Teachers responded to the statements by indicating whether the statement condition ocurred in their school almost never, occasionally, frequently or almost always.

A Likert scaling procedure also was chosen to develop a scale to measure teachers' attitudes about their professional growth and development. The format

of the Likert scale was designed to elicit self perceptions about being a teacher and the professional growth potential of the role. Discriminating reactions to statements of feelings and beliefs are expressed in terms of agreement with the statement and the strength of the reaction is indicated by the choices available: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. The scale consists of 18 statements and was constructed to include the dimensions of individual needs and the normative work context as indicators of the professional growth and development attitudes.

Both instruments used perceptions as a means to measure a given variable and the results considered compatible for the purpose of making correlations and associations to determine relationship. Each variable, school climate and professional growth and development attitudes, was measured and analyzed independent of the other. The analysis sought to determine if the relationship was one of predictability.

Sample

Twenty percent (20%) of the subject teachers of fifteen high schools was randomly selected to receive the two instruments. The 89 of 151 teachers responding represented an overall response rate of 62%, ranging from 33% to 100% per school. One school's data were not adequate to be used in the final analysis and therefore, only fourteen schools remained in the study.

RESULTS

Responses to the School Climate Profile were coded respectively 1, 2, 3, 4, for almost never, occasionally, frequently, and almost always. The rated responses per teacher were summed and a mean of these sums per school was computed as the School Climate Index. Each school's Index was used to rank the schools from one to fourteen.

Each of the four determinants of the profile represents a collection of statements that contributes to the overall school organizational climate: general climate factors, program, process and materials. The responses to the statements in each determinant were summed per school and a mean computed for each determinant. The mean score of each determinant was then ranked relative to the school's Climate Index rank.

The procedure of ranking the School Climate Index and the four determinant means was done in preparation for computing Goodman's and Kruskal's Coefficient, Gamma which would indicate to what extent the four determinants contributed to the overall ranking of the school based on its School Climate Index.

The gamma coefficient computed for each determinant was as follows:

General Climate Factors	0.585
Program	0.714
Process	0.780
Materials	0.231

The ranking of the gamma coefficients indicated that the procedures used in the operation of the school contributed most to teachers' perceptions of the school organizational climate. The educational program and general climate factors were considered the next most important determinants and the materials determinant contributed least to teacher perceptions of the school organizational climate.

Each determinant consists of from three to eight subsets of statements that are descriptive of that determinant. The responses for each subset were summed, a mean computed per school and the descriptor subset mean ranked among the other subsets in that determinant. A gamma coefficient was computed for each ranked subset relative to the rank of each determinant. (Table 1)

This information provided a more specific description of the determinants and an indication of the conditions that teachers perceived contributed most to a positive school organizational climate. Procedures that facilitate the school's ability to solve its problems and to make improvements based on known goals was considered to be the most important condition. Teachers' involvement in decision-making, effective communications between various school groups and teacher autonomy with accompanying accountability were also important contributors to the rank position of the process determinant.

Within the educational program teachers indicated that varied learning experiences for both teachers and students contributed most to the rank position of this determinant. The school's support and organizational structure appropriate to the learners' maturity and a varied reward system for teachers and students were also considered important program structures to be in place.

Caring about each other within the school and the school's capability for self-renewal were considered the most important general climate factors. Other contributing conditions were respect among teachers, students and parents, high morale, and opportunities for input by teachers and students within the school.

Although the materials determinant was of least importance, the supportiveness and efficiency of the school's logistical system, the adequacy of resources and the suitability of the school plant contributed nearly equally to the position of this determinant.

Responses to the Professional Growth and Development Attitude Scale were coded respectively 1, 2, 3, 4, for strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. The rated responses per teacher were summed and a mean of these sums per school computed as the Attitude Index and used to rank the schools from one to fourteen.

The responses to the statements related to each

concept (individual needs and work context) were summed per school and a mean computed for each concept. The mean score of each concept per school was then ranked relative to each school's Attitude Index rank position.

To determine the extent to which each concept contributed to the rank position of the school, the Goodmans' and Kruskal's Coefficient, Gamma was computed. The gamma coefficient for the individual needs concept was 0.644 and 0.682 for the work context concept.

Since the two concepts were relatively similar in importance, the responses to the descriptor subsets were analyzed using the Gamma Coefficient computation. (Table 2) Within the individual needs concept teachers' personal motivation and satisfaction contributed most. To a lesser degree teachers' perceptions about their personal role expectations and role definition contributed to the rank of the individual needs concept.

Perception of others' assessment of the teachers' role performance contributed most to the work context concept. Teachers' perceptions of their own role commitment, others' expectations of the role, experience in the teacher role and others' definition of their role also described the work context concept, but were considered less important.

To explore any relationship between the two variables of school climate and professional growth and

development attitudes the schools were ranked according to their School Climate Index and matched with their respective Attitude Index rank. The schools were also ranked according to their Attitude Index and matched with their respective School Climate Index rank. This information was used to compute a Guttman's Coefficient of Predictability, Lambda.

The correlation between the two variables was high (0.923) when the school's Climate Index was held constant and teachers' Professional Growth and Development Attitude Index was the dependent variable. When the Attitude Index was held constant and the School Climate Index was the dependent variable the relationship was a perfect correlation (1.000).

This relationship indicated that if the teachers' professional growth and development attitudes were known one could predict with certainty their perceptions of the school's organizational climate. Conversely, if the school's organizational climate was known, one could predict the professional growth and development attitudes of the teachers with nearly as much certainty.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated high school teachers' perceptions about their school's organizational climate, and their professional growth and development attitudes.

Conclusions drawn from the analysis include teachers' priorities of conditions that need to be in place to have a positive climate and the influences considered most important to their professional growth and development attitudes.

High school teachers indicated that the most important influence on their perceptions of a positive school climate were the procedures that facilitated the school's ability to solve its problems and make improvements based on known goals. Structures that invited their participation in the decision-making process and created effective communications among the students, parents, administrators and themselves was next in importance.

These conditions are consistent with the recommendations being made by many that high schools must be restructured to meet the challenges of student learning and maintaining a viable teaching cadre (Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984; Boyer, 1983). It is also supportive of Lieberman's (1988) suggestion that teachers' roles are changing which raise issues for those preparing teachers and those who are responsible for their continued development.

School personnel must keep these conditions in mind as they consider reworking the structures of the high school. Boyer (1983) urges flexibility to achieve educational objectives effectively. Bureaucratic

rigidity must be challenged or it will stifle the very innovations needed to develop schools that respond to the diverse student population of today's high schools (Sizer, 1984). Teachers will need to be included in the discussion of new structures, asked to assume some leadership and accountability for the innovations and given more autonomy and responsibility to accomplish the task of educating the nation's children (Lieberman, 1988).

Other supporting conditions that need to be in place for teachers are related to the educational program of the school and the relationships among each other. The structures developed should be appropriate for the maturity of the learners and a varied reward system put in place. Boyer (1983) proposes adjustments in teaching loads, hours scheduled for teachers and students, and a variety of recognitions for good teachers and excellent student performance.

Underlying these renewal activities should be an atmosphere of caring about each other. Consideration for each others' concerns, abilities and growth should be integral to the procedures, structures, innovations and roles developed within the school.

The importance of these conditions for teachers should also impact on those involved in planning and implementing school improvement efforts. If procedures for teacher input are not in place the viability of the

improvement process is likely to be in jeopardy. Likewise, if all groups associated with the school (teachers, parents, students) are not kept informed progress may be slowed or sabotaged.

Change or improvements imply a process of learning by those involved in the changes/improvements. Those planning the formal structure of staff development for the purpose of school improvement should also develop means for teacher input and involvement in the decisions made about the what, when and how of staff development.

The structures in place or put in place were found to influence the professional growth and development attitudes of the teachers. The teachers indicated that their perceptions of how others assessed their teaching performance was a critical contributor to these attitudes. When recognition of teachers occurs, awards for student achievement given or formal evaluations completed, teachers receive information about what others think of their performance. They may compare themselves to others receiving recognition and draw conclusions about their relative competence.

Staff development will have increased meaning if these attitudes are considered when the planning is in progress. The development of inservice content may focus around the school improvement efforts or respond to the individual improvement recommendation contained in the formal evaluations.

Personal motivation and satisfaction levels were also indicated as important personal needs that influenced teachers' professional growth and development attitudes. Staff development planners that consider teacher needs relative to their performance evaluations and the benefits seen by teachers for their own development will likely have an increased impact on the professional growth of the school or district staff.

The professional growth and development attitudes of teachers and their perceptions of their school's organizational climate are related. If one is known the other can be predicted with a high degree of certainty. School improvement planners, staff development coordinators, principals and other administrators, and teachers themselves would be well advised to consider the organizational context in which professional development is to occur combined with the attitudes fostered by that organization which influence professional development.

Table 1

School Climate Determinant Gamma Coefficients

Determinants	Gamma Coefficients
Part A	
General Climate Factors:	
Respect	0.689
Trust	0.297
High Morale	0.644
Opportunity for Input	0.511
Continuing Academic Growth	0.451
Cohesiveness	0.582
School Renewal	0.756
Caring	0.798
Part B	
Program Determinants:	
Active Learning	0.461
Individual Performance Experience	0.551
Varied Learning Environment	0.681
Flexible Curriculum	0.333
Support & Structure	0.667
Rules Cooperatively Determined	0.422
Varied Reward System	0.622
Part C	
Process Determinant:	
Problem Solving Ability	0.667
Improvement School Goals	0.644
Identify & Work with Conflict	0.582
Effective Communication	0.618
Involvement in Decision Making	0.644
Autonomy with Accountability	0.604
Effective Teaching & Learning Strategies	0.356
Ability to Plan the Future	0.511
Part D	
Materials Determinant:	
Adequate Resource	0.701
Support & Efficiency of Logistics	0.758
Suitability of School Plant	0.604

Table 2

Professional Growth and Development
Attitude Descriptor Gamma Coefficients

Concept/ Descriptors		Gamma Coefficients
Concept 1 - Individual Needs		
Descriptor:	Personal Satisfaction	0.762
	Personal Motivation	0.773
	Personal Role Expectations	0.568
	Personal Role Definition	0.488
Concept 2 - Work Context		
Descriptor:	Role Experience	0.341
	Role Commitment	0.435
	Others' Role Performance Assessment	0.750
	Others' Role Expectations	0.425
	Others' Role Definition	0.308

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